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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BRATISLAVA 000619

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TAGS: [IZ](#) [LO](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT TO CALL FOR COORDINATED WITHDRAWAL OF
SLOVAK UNIT, BUT CONTINUING ROLE IN TRAINING, SUPPORT FOR
STABILITY IN IRAQ; FICO WANTS TO VISIT BAGHDAD

REF: BRATISLAVA 617

Classified By: CDA Lawrence R. Silverman for reason 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (S) Para 4 of this message contains an action request
regarding Slovak government officials' planned travel to
Baghdad August 17.

12. (S) As promised reftel, FM Jan Kubis provided CDA July 29
an advance copy of the Iraq-related text of the Fico
government's just-agreed program that will be presented for
parliament approval August 1. An informal translation of the
full Slovak text appears in para 5. The draft was agreed by
the coalition late July 28 and Kubis does not expect it to
change, despite further discussions of the general program
among coalition leaders. Kubis admitted that though he had
pressed for the document to refer merely to a
"transformation" of the Slovak military's role in Iraq, PM
Fico insisted on the word "withdrawal" in order to meet his
campaign promise. Kubis did, however, push successfully for
added language that stressed Slovakia's interest in further
contributing to strengthening stability and democracy in
Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East. In response to CDA's
question on timing and phasing of a withdrawal, Kubis said
the statement intentionally avoided a timetable, and he noted
that the next rotation of the de-mining unit, scheduled for
August 22, would go ahead as planned. He did not expect a
hasty withdrawal and expressed the hope it would be drawn
out.

13. (S) As for what would take the place of the de-mining
unit, Kubis said the Defense Ministry was still working on
proposals, but he said it would include training "on the
ground in Iraq," as part of the NATO training Mission and
possibly elsewhere. He clearly understood that such training
was far preferable to providing training in Slovakia.
Although the statement first emphasizes "civilian means" of a
new role, a following portion refers to "contributions to
building up the Iraqi security forces," and this means a
future military training role. Kubis emphasized that
Slovakia wanted to make a real contribution to this effort
and that he was awaiting specifics from MOD. Kubis said he
could not say how many Slovaks would provide training and any
other roles, but noted "politically, we cannot withdraw 103
and then bring in, let's say, 57 troops" (i.e., the number
would be lower). Further afield, Kubis added that Slovakia
would look into what else it could do in Afghanistan, and had
already formally raised with the Czechs and Hungarians the
possibility of cooperating in a PRT. (Comment: Kubis has a
longstanding interest in Afghanistan and wants to see
Slovakia more involved in contributing to its stability.)

14. (S) Reftel noted that FM Kubis was planning to join

Defense Minister Kasicky's proposed August 17 trip to Iraq. Kubis told Charge July 29 that PM Fico himself wants to join the visit ("it is 99 percent certain he intends to go"). Kubis emphasized the close-hold nature of the PM's possible travel, noting that he is informing only the USG. They will not tell their own Embassy in Baghdad until they are already on the plane. CDA impressed upon Kubis the need for a constructive media line surrounding such a high profile visit. The GOS needed to focus the media on Slovakia's continued role in Iraq; sending a different signal would be viewed negatively in both Washington and Baghdad. Kubis got the point, saying he understood that while the PM or others would refer to a withdrawal of the de-miners, they needed to highlight a continuing assistance role and Slovakia's commitment to furthering stabilization and democratization in Iraq. Action request: Please advise us on any further response to the GOS based on the proposal of the PM's participation in such a visit. Kubis said Fico would like to meet with PM al-Maliki and other GOI officials as well as USG military and civilian officials as we deem appropriate. DefMin Kasicky is coordinating all aspects of the visit on the Slovak side.

15. (SBU) Informal Embassy translation of the text on Iraq: "The government of the Slovak Republic, based on dialogue with its partners and the Iraqi government, will present a clear, acceptable and scheduled program for the withdrawal of the Slovak unit from Iraq. The government of the Slovak Republic is prepared to participate in the fulfillment of other roles for securing stability and peace in Iraq through civilian means and likewise is prepared to participate in the process of building up the Iraqi security forces, which will be capable to take over responsibility for stability and security in Iraq. The government of the Slovak Republic

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declares its interest in contributing further to strengthening stability and democracy in Iraq, Afghanistan and in the Middle East." (End informal Embassy translation.)

VALLEE